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**THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER**

That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic. — Thomas Paine

## *Taxing the Farmer*



Paddy Lane, President, I.F.A.

## THE IRISHTOWN



## GARRYOWEN





# PISEOGS

The word piseog has a number of meanings: it can mean a superstitious belief, an attempt to ward off evil forces and the use of witchcraft to increase one's wealth or bring down misfortune upon another. For most people today it means the use of magical powers and black science to bring about evil.

Piseogery has its origins in the shamanism of prehistoric man: the shaman was the witch doctor, the wise man of primitive tribes; the people went to him in time of sickness and war, at birth and death and before undertaking big hunting expeditions. The works of the prehistoric shaman are found on the wall paintings in caves in Southern France and Northern Spain depicting wounded bison, deer and wild horse; the tribe believed that if the high priest painted animals bristling with arrows the hunt would be a success. This is sympathetic magic.

Piseogery can be traced back to witchcraft which is the ancient pagan nature religion predating Christianity, and to the practices and rituals that flourished in the dawn of time. The practice of witchcraft continued throughout the centuries – sometimes practised openly and then going underground in times of persecution. With the passing of The Fraudulent Mediums Act in Britain in 1951, the witches came out into the open; they were then legally free to carry on their practices. The witches maintain that theirs is a religion: people may devote themselves to good or evil, but many serious practitioners and occultists despise the black witch or magician. When I outlined some research I had done into piseogery to an English witch he remarked on the 'malignancy and degeneracy of the practice' and claimed that all traces of the nature religion had disappeared.

The piseogai has two weapons in his armoury – black science and psychological warfare. When contagious abortion was the scourge of the farming community the piseog worker took a number of eggs, pricked holes in them with a needle, rubbed the eggs in an aborted foetus and placed the eggs in wynds of hay. The egg carried the bacilli of brucellosis and these multiplied and increased in the heavy heat of the summer hay so that when the farmer was carting the hay into his barn in the autumn he was bringing contagious abortion to his own herd. In the same way dumping diseased animals or sections of a dead animal helped to spread the abortion.

One farmer told me that having found a piece of rotting meat in a meadow, he mowed all around it, leaving the meat untouched and the hay around it unmown. His cows aborted that year because the bacilli flourishing in the sun had contaminated the unmown hay. If on discovering the diseased haunch he had immediately removed it from the meadow and cut the surrounding swaths of hay and burned the meat and the hay in a safe place, he would have saved his herd. However that required knowledge, and the piseogai traded in ignorance and fear. It is doubtful if they always understood the scientific basis for the success of their projects but one thing they did understand was the psychological weapon of fear.

One man described to me seventeen years of financial loss, fear and unhappiness and physical and mental ill-health which began with his discovering a decomposing calf on his land. Subsequent to this a man whom he believed to be a piseogai arrived at his farm on a Sunday morning asking for a lift to Mass; these two happenings, combined to make the man's life a misery. His milk yield dropped, cows aborted, and died, sickly calves were born, pigs and a horse died, his health deteriorated mentally and physically, and the doctors could diagnose no illness. He was an ideal target, believing totally in the power of the piseog so that any strange object that appeared on the farm betokened the continuation of the silent war.

This is the most powerful prong of attack: there is in Western civilization a basic Calvinistic belief running deep in the subconscious that one is chosen or one is damned. Hemingway, for instance, explores this theme in his novels and was obviously imbued with it himself. It is also to be found in

Kafka's writings: a man is charged; he knows he's innocent but the very fact that he's charged makes him feel guilty. The witch doctor points the death stick, the offending person goes into his hut and dies; he has been condemned by a power greater than himself. Again, amongst the primitive tribes in Polynesia a mirror is unknown; in its stead they use the calabash – a tray filled with water to break or overturn the calabash. To destroy the image is akin to pointing the bone, and the person will pine away and die.

In the same way the victim of the piseog worker feels guilty in being singled out and becomes a victim to guilt as well as fear, falling totally under the power of the adversary. The Catholic Church has always recognised this and used the Benedictine medal, which the farmers buried in the land during the mission, to combat the blanket force of terror, superstition and guilt.

Nobody has ever succeeded in penetrating the world of the piseogai and, unlike the witches who have written books about their practices, the piseogai have not gone to print. I got superficial information from one old practitioner but she was unable to take me into the grey world of initiation, indoctrination, the handing on of the tradition. And the tradition does seem to be handed on within families, possibly through the mother; again European witchcraft has frequently run in families. A contemporary study would further reveal that the practitioners are often people of high intelligence, possessing great physical energy, deep sexual powers and are bored with country life.

Unlike witchcraft where coven practice is the norm, the piseog worker works within the family or alone. There are also undoubtedly disturbed people who attempt to dabble in it but they are easily recognisable.

The use of sympathetic magic is another pointer to the belief that piseogery has its origins in witchcraft and not in black magic. (Black magic is an obscene reversion of Christian rituals for magical purposes mostly found in Spain and Italy and abominated by the majority of occultists; it has sometimes been claimed that the piseogai dabbled in it but there is no evidence to support this claim. The most infamous black magicians in Ireland were the habitues of the Hellfire Club in the Dublin mountains). The best example of sympathetic magic is the placing of eggs, horse snares, even turnips or heads of cabbage on another man's farm in the belief that as the objects rotted the neighbour's wealth decreased and flowed to the magician. Accordingly country people burned gifts from suspected persons; these were generally burned at a crossroads, on No Man's Land.

In the same way the people feared the touch of the piseogai. Recently an old man touched by someone he feared, panicked, fell down steps and injured his foot. Cats have frequently been the familiars of witches, and when prayers were said to protect the house, and the people and cattle were being sprinkled with holy water, they studiously refrained from sprinkling the dog and cat; this again reflects European thinking on witchcraft. Sometimes eggs were found in a potato garden or on a dung hill, twelve in a circle, the thirteenth in the middle. Thirteen is considered a magic number in witchcraft.

Whether piseogery has its lifspring in Celtic druidism or in the Anglo-Norman school of witchcraft, whose most famous pupil was Alice Kyteler, is uncertain. In fact, the only thing that is certain is that very little is known. There is no authoritative book on piseogs and there won't be until an initiate reveals the secrets. Our knowledge of witchcraft we owe to Dr. Gerald Gardner's decision to write about the craft from inside as a practising witch. And while there has been a recent revival in the practice of witchcraft, piseogery seems to have been in definite decline; the advent of electricity contributed to this situation. Despite this there can be little doubt that in the past innocent old women whose only transgression was eccentricity were subjected to great pressure and suffered much mental agony surrounded as they were by suspicious and superstitious neighbours. Nevertheless it would be a mistake to believe the practice is dead – it's just as the old piseogai said: "We've no union, a ghra".

JOHN LENIHAN



# SOME IRISH FASCISTS

Fascism has never gained mass support in Britain or Ireland, especially among workers. Even at the height of their influence Mosley's Blackshirts and O'Duffy's Blueshirts never came near to attaining power.

The past decade has seen the emergence of a new fascist party in Britain, the National Front. Through its tactics of provocative marches and its hostility to black immigrants, the Front has attempted to force its way on to the centre of the political stage. But, judging from the party's performance at the polls, it has no hope of gaining national support in the foreseeable future.

In the same period no similar fascist group has surfaced in Ireland. The lack of black immigrants, the rise of the Provos and the continuing conflict in Northern Ireland may be factors in this situation. But the last attempt to launch an Irish fascist group has not been documented.

Until their clashes with the Limerick-based Maoists few people had heard of the National Movement. The Movement was the most recent attempt to establish a fascist-type political organisation in Ireland. Its leaders were John Buckley, a Limerick window-dresser, A.L. Price, a Dublin postal worker, and Comdt. W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, the 1916 veteran, then in his 84th year. The movement was implacably anti-Communist and pro-apartheid and was pledged to defend "our traditional heritage of nationality and our Christian way of life". John Buckley stated: "Any end to destroy communism is justified. At the moment we are working within the bounds of legality".

In an article in its magazine *The Nation* A.L. Price gave a more detailed definition of the Movement's policies: "It cannot be said to slavishly imitate German National Socialism or Italian Fascism. Yet the Movement recognises the immense

contributions to European political thought and the principles of Pan-Europeanism or Co-Nationalism made by both Hitler and Mussolini. The National Movement of Ireland remains committed to National Socialism as Co-Nationalism". A.L. Price also wrote a pamphlet giving a sympathetic reassessment of Adolf Hitler.

It was estimated that the Movement had about 50 active members, but it was only able to muster less than half of this number when its members marched to Bunratty in January 1970 to welcome the Springboks. The nine miles march led to scuffles with anti-apartheid demonstrators. The Movement was strongest in Limerick, where many of its members, including John Buckley, were employed at Cannocks department store. This is not surprising, as historically the roots of fascist power have always been regional in origin. Buckley was the editor and printer of the Movement's publications.

The Limerick section of the Movement functioned for ten years and was formerly known amongst its members as the Irish Nazi Party. The party had close contacts with the American Nazi Party and with British fascist groups, including people as Coln Jordan, and Sir Oswald Mosley. One of the party members' most distinctive features was their red armbands with white discs and black swastikas. The Limerick branch had also many contacts in West Germany and, under a youth holiday exchange scheme, free holidays in West Germany were advertised in *New Guard*, one of its last publications. Magazines from America and Britain, such as the *Stormtrooper* and the *Vugler* and publications including *the Red Jew*, *Bolshevism is Jewish* and even the notorious *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* circulated freely among the members. The members were also profoundly impressed with salutes, uniforms, medals and marches — the traditional trappings of fascism.

The National Movement publicly denied that it was anti-Semitic but many of its publications had a clear anti-Jewish slant. Its Limerick magazine the *Nationalist Worker* had photographs of Steve Coughlan on its front and back covers, with a bold headline exhorting the people of Limerick to support Steve ("He stood by you — Now stand by him"). Inside the 1904 anti-Jewish pogrom was defended in an unsigned article and Gerald Goldberg the Cork solicitor violently criticised. Among the other people attacked was Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien whose name was linked with an incredible and unsavoury allegation.

Until the arrival in Limerick of the Maoists, the Movement had failed to win public attention. The red scare, started by Steve Coughlan, and the fear it aroused, was crudely exploited by the Movement. It launched a campaign to close down the Maoist bookshop and hundreds of signatures were collected in a petition. The petition was presented to the Limerick City Council and John Buckley addressed the Council meeting. During the meeting the Movement was complimented for its work against the Maoists. Encouraged by this reception members of the Movement, dressed in black polo-necked shirts were active on the streets of Limerick for some months afterwards distributing leaflets and selling their literature.

But despite the increased pace of their work the Movement failed to gain public support. It is significant that among the decisive voices in the rise of Mussolini and Hitler were those of the Catholic Church and big business. While a number of teachers were members of the Movement, no clergyman or industrialist identified with the organisation or its aims. Extreme right wing groups have made little headway in Ireland in the past and the National Movement declined away until it became yet another defunct political pressure group. But this is not too surprising: in a country where the Provos and other republican parties have flourished, the fascists had little opportunity to make any kind of headway.

## ITE MISSA EST

Hush there,  
reverence please, in the chapel of evening,  
it is the sacramental hour,  
— the consummation of the day-mass,  
the last exhibition of the Host upon cosmic altars,  
as chaliced wine pours red libations  
on the altarcloth of clouds;

genuflecting,  
I pray the blessings of the sungod  
upon you my brothers;  
may the holy water of the rains  
bless your fields with abundance.

Oh, blessed be this hour,  
blessed be the sungod,  
blessed be our faith in his resurrection;  
go now, it is ended,  
while the hooded sacristan of the dusk  
lights the candles of the tabernacles  
of the vast basilica of the night,  
for the vigils of the stars begin.

SEAN HEALY



# Up and down the Irishtown

PART ONE

## SOME SCHOOLING

Making your First Communion was great but first you had to go to school and learn all about God and the holy angels. Learning about sin was important, too, but not nearly as important as sitting quiet in class. The nuns were all right except for their strange names, and wondering how often they washed their hands and face. There was a long shed in a big yard where someone put you sitting on a wooden seat while you ate bread and butter.

A nun rang a bell, with her two hands holding it out in front of her. Another nun clapped her hands till everyone formed in line. Miss Killachy played the harmonium, just inside the school door, and the line weaved and snaked back to the classrooms chanting, 'All into school, Jackie on the moon'. Suddenly an urgent call elsewhere. What to do? . . . The pain is terrible . . . Sister Atrocious is worse. Fear wins and the pair continues with rumblings and corkscrew jabs. Sister's nose is twitching, her eyes wandering, moving nearer. 'Jimmy Burke, take Johnny Mack out to the lavatory'.

Soon the big day draws near but first the class must go to the chapel and be examined by Fr. Mack, walking up and down, a hunting crop in his hand, hitting the form a crack when asking a question. 'Who were our first parents? Go home, and when you find out come back to me', Mother said, 'Mutha scatterbrain, is there anything at all in that skull of yours. Does Big Jack Fr. Mack think I have nothing else to do with my money besides buying First Communion suits . . . Bishop Keane is a nice man. I'll go out to Corbally to see him if I have to'.

The whole world was changed, everybody was smiling, saying how lovely you looked, and slipping money into your pocket. The bunch of flowers looked sad from being strangled so long and seemed ready to drop from all the trotting about with mother. Pockets were getting heavier all the time, even the ould wan that complained you yesterday for giving back answers, added her mite to the weight. 'Ah, Mrs. Mack, he's a credit to you, isn't his suit lovely'. 'I did the best I could for him; the clothes are a bit big, but he'll grow into them? 'He will indeed, and God help you, 'tis soon enough he'll grow out of them'. 'Tis true for you, Katie: that's the way, boys today, men tomorrow'.

Two other important events were learning to swim and joining the Boys' Confraternity. The first was a pleasurable

## THIS IS THE WEATHER

This is the weather when the wild geese fly overhead,  
the moorbirds shelter in bracken and heather,  
and sheep find windbreak by the old stone wall;  
this is the weather,

when Autumn is broken and derelict  
dead in the ditch;  
gaunt clouds haunt the upland rim of the earth,  
striding the moors like giant creatures of myth,  
while the winds the mad vandals howl from the top of the hills,  
as the twilight's profaned in the shadows,  
the veils of her beauty all ravaged and rent  
by the arctic marauders that plunder and pillage  
the Autumn's art treasures, and humanist harvest;  
all put to the sword of the hordes of that neurotic fascist,  
— the Fuehrer, Herr Winter.

SEAN HEALY

by John Bennis

task, the second a loveless duty. Pals saw to one, father the other. The dreadful, inevitable move from St. John's Convent School to John Street Christian Brothers School came next. 'What's your name'. 'Johnny Mack'. 'Where do you live?' 'Down the Town Wall'. 'Where's that?' 'Down around the corner'. 'Is this your first day in class?' 'Tis, 'Well, watch out for 'The Bear'; that's him up there at the fire, the big fat brother. He's a terror for the leather?' Another teacher was called 'Dipper'. He had a trick of bending both knees together. This action baffled the younger boys, but 'Soaker' Long took pity on his ignorance. 'His arse is too big for his trousers; the cloth is cutting his fork', he explained.

The clock struck and all stood for the Hail Mary. A sudden feeling of panic also struck. In a split second the scene was shattered: outside the door, dashing down the stairs, out the schoolgate, running blindly homeward, colliding with father on his way back to work, struggling free of his grasp, tearing down Mitchel Street, turning the corner, facing the house, father hot on my heels, too hot, no use running in there, keeping going past the first alley, turning at the next, right again, then left, now right, in Knuckle Quin's wide open door, ducking behind the counter, dragged out by the hair and marched back to the awful presence.

In time master and pupil got to know each other, but there was no love lost. The Bear had one soft spot, Irish history. You could be as ignorant as a kish of brogues and as thick as bottled pigs' pickle but if you evinced the slightest interest in the grand affairs of Erin's past glory, your name and pedigree were given an elitest stamp. Brian Boru was his great favourite, a holy terror in battle — look what he did to the Danes. 'Fond of his belly, too, by all accounts', Soaker Long whispered behind his hands, 'and no bad dab with the women'.

Going from the Bear to 'Dandy's' class was like mother saying, 'The month of May is in, what are you wearing your boots for?' Out in the canal fields feeling the warm, silky cowdung oozing between your toes. Dandy, small, dapper, sprightly, generously round fore and aft, neck glowing red above the high, flyaway, hard-starched collar wings, his face, where visible through greyblack tangled hair, cherry ripe. He spoke like Chaliapin taking the last note in 'Drinking'. He was a figure of amusement and affection with a fondness for nicknaming boys, especially boys bigger than himself. 'Here, you, come up to the board and write 'punctuality' . . . Excellent, 'Sack of Oats', but there aren't three ts in the word. You, boy, read this passage . . . that was very good, Brass Band, sit down. Boy on the left of the back row, come up and show me Wales on the map. Never mind, Narky, 'tis evident you'll never be as good a scholar as your brother, Martin'.

Friday afternoon and the class was all joy, with a devil take the schooling spirit abroad: laughing and joking, cheeks as fiery as the June sun, hopping about like a kid with a new hurley, 'finding' your chalk in some timid boy's pocket and making a great furore like mad March bluffing old men into thinking winter is back again.

It has been well if not too truly said that schooldays are life's happiest. Things happen then, as they happen later on in life, too, but mostly the best things occur when girls are still unendurable pests and frogs and flies have dimensions beyond the understanding of elders. Mark Twain had a good way with frogs and could make them jump to fame and fortune. He could make them lose a bet, too, with his own methods, some of them crude. Who'd ever think of filling a frog with lead, when a straw or hollow reed, neatly applied with a little hot air





THE IRISHTOWN

would make a frog so fat that he couldn't get off the ground. Flies, wings removed, racing up the garden wall, harnessed to common pins – that was a sight to cheer the heart of any boy who'd just been clouted by his father for missing the family rosary.

Friday night came, with father searching his waistcoat pocket for tuppence. Then a gallop to the paper shop and back to the fire, reading this week's episode of the 'Men from Mars' and not caring a damn who H.G. Wells was, for 'Boys' Magazine' was the best tuppenny buy, and hoping that Bunker Graney's 'Magnet' was all there when you would swap with him on Sunday morning after ten o'clock Mass, because last week Harry Wharton and Co. of Greyfriars had sent Billy Bunter to Coventry. You have a soft spot for the 'fat owl' of the Remove, but the greedy fellow should never have pinched all that tuck.

Reading was grand but for the irritations: father playing the piano, Mrs. McArdle dancing, mother singing. Mother was good, but not as good as Mrs. Dunphy. When Mrs. Dunphy sang over a tub of washing every passerby looked in over the

half-door and marvelled. But few marvelled at the big family of four sons and three daughters in the tiny house. The sons were dog lovers and bird fanciers and kept blackbirds, thrushes, linnets, finches, dogs and a young ass. Once an old man asked how in the name of Jassus did they all fit in one room and a kitchen.

A tinker came down the street one day crying, 'Pots, kettles to mend, pots, kettles to mend'. Stopping outside our house, he unslung his budget and laid it on the path. 'Pots, kettles to mend', he continued to cry. Mrs. Coughlan waddled across the road, a kettle in her hand. 'It wants a new arse; t'oul man is burned out'. 'I can see that; it must be very old'. 'I have it since I was married'. 'I'll be good to it, ma'am'.

Bright shiny squares of tin came out of the budget followed by a pinchers, hammer and shears. The tinker was ripping off the old bottom when mother shouted at me: 'Go back to school, it's nearly one o'clock. But a jog to the top of Mitchel Street showed that, far from being late, every schoolboy on the road was outside the police barracks laughing fit to burst, and not taking a bit of notice of the scarlet-faced Brother banging his hands and shouting, 'Get back to school'. Two lorry loads of mad-drunk Black and Tans were singing, 'We'll hang Devilera on a sour apple tree'. The Brother's face took on some more colour when he saw his unfeeling charges running up and down the road, while the Tans cheered and egged them on with fists of silver, tossed and scattered to winners and losers alike.

But all bad things come to an end, as the soldier said when he threw the squalling brat out the window, and finally the Brother regained control. 'Line up there and empty your pockets. You boy, put all that filthy lucre into this hat. Come on now, out here into the school yard'. The Brother led the way, the hat held hard in front of him like it had a bad stink. The schoolyard wall divided the school from the barracks, and the Brother stood close to it as, with a few short, sharp words, he swung his arm in a wide half-circle. For a second or two the sun glittered on the rising and falling coins before they clattered sadly on the Tans' backyard.

(To be continued).

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# GARRYOWEN

The little ruined outlet, which gives its name to one of the most popular national songs of Erin, is situated on the acclivity of a hill near the city of Limerick, commanding a not unpleasant view of that fine old town, with the noble stream that washes its battered towers, and a richly cultivated surrounding country. Tradition has preserved the occasion of its celebrity, and the origin of its name, which appears to be compounded of two Irish words signifying "Owen's garden". A person so called was the owner about half a century since, of a cottage, and plot of ground on this spot, which, from its contiguity to the town, became a favourite holiday resort with the young citizens of both sexes — a lounge presenting accommodations somewhat similar to those which are offered to the London mechanic by the Battersea tea-gardens.

Owen's garden was the general rendezvous for those who sought for simple amusement or for dissipation. The old people drank together under the shades of trees — the young played at ball, goal, or other athletic exercises on the green; while a few lingering by the hedge-rows with their fair acquaintances, cheated the time with sounds less boisterous, indeed, but yet possessing their fascination also.

The festivities of our fathers, however, were frequently distinguished by so fierce a character of mirth, that, for any difference in the result of their convivial meetings, they might as well have been pitched encounters. Owen's garden was soon as famous for scenes of strife, as it was for mirth and humour; and broken heads became a staple article of manufacture in the neighbourhood.

This new feature in the diversions of the place was encouraged by a number of young persons of rank somewhat superior to that of the usual frequenters of the garden. They were the sons of the more respectable citizens, the merchants and wholesale traders of the city, just turned loose from school with a greater supply of animal spirit than they had wisdom to govern.

These young gentlemen, being fond of wit, amused themselves by forming parties at night, to wring the heads off all the geese, and the knockers of all the hall-doors in the neighbourhood. They sometimes suffered their genius to soar as high as the breaking of a lamp, and even the demolition of a watchman; but perhaps this species of joking was found a little too serious to be repeated over frequently, for few achievements of so daring a violence are to be found amongst their records. They were obliged to content themselves with the less ambitious distinction of destroying the knockers and store-locks, annoying the peaceable inmates of the neighbouring houses with long-continued assaults on the front doors, terrifying the quiet passengers with every species of insult and provocation, and indulging their fratricidal propensities against all the geese in Garryowen.

The fame of the "Garryowen Boys" soon spread far and wide. Their deeds were celebrated by some inglorious minstrel of the day in that air which has since resounded over every quarter of the world; and even disputed the palm of national popularity with "Patrick's Day". A string of jolly verses were appended to the tune, which soon enjoyed a notoriety similar to that of the famous "Lilliburlero, bullum-a-la" which sung

## NORTH WINDS

Cat-of-nine-tails of the vicious North winds  
whip the bare human back of the earth;

long weals of snow streak the yielding brown flesh,  
that deserved not nor sought,  
the wrath of the fascist white gods of the north.

SEAN HEALY

King James out of his three kingdoms. The name of Garryowen was as well known as that of the Irish Numantium, Limerick, itself, and Owen's little garden became almost a synonym for Ireland.

But that principle of existence which assigns to the life of man its periods of youth, maturity, and decay, has its analogy in the fate of villages, as in that of empires. Assyria fell, and so did Garryowen! Rome had its decline, and Garryowen was not immortal! Both are now an idle sound, with nothing but the recollections of old tradition to invest them with an interest. The still notorious suburb is little better than a heap of rubbish, where a number of smoked and mouldering walls, standing out from the masses of stone and mortar, indicate the position of a once populous row of dwelling-houses. A few roofs yet remain unshaken, under which some impoverished families endeavour to work out a wretched subsistence, by maintaining a species of huxter trade, by cobbling old shoes, and manufacturing ropes.

A small rookery wearies the ears of the inhabitants at one end of the outlet, and a rope-walk, which extends along the adjacent slope of Gallows-green (so called for certain reasons), brings to the mind of the conscious spectator associations that are not calculated to enliven the prospect. Neither is he thrown into a more jocular frame of mind as he picks his steps over the insulated paving stones that appear amid the green slough with which the street is deluged, and encounters, at the other end, an alley of coffinmakers' shops, with a fever hospital on one side and a churchyard on the other. A person who was bent on a journey to the other world could not desire a more expeditious outfit than Garryowen could now afford him, nor a more commodious choice of conveyances, from the machine on the slope above glanced at, to the pest-house at the farther end.

But it is ill talking lightly on a serious subject. The days of Garryowen are gone, like those of ancient Erin: and the feats of her once formidable heroes are nothing more than a winter's evening tale. Owen is in his grave, and his garden looks dreary as a ruined churchyard. The greater number of his meery customers have followed him to a narrow play-ground, which, though not less crowded, affords less room for fun, and less opportunity for contention. The worm is there the reveller — the owl whoops out his defiance without answer (save the echo's) — the best whisky in Munster would not now "drive the cold out of their hearts" — and the withered old sexton is able to knock the bravest of them over the pate with impunity. A few, perhaps, may still remain to look back with a fond shame to the scene of their early follies, and to smile at the page in which these follies are recorded.

Still, however, there is something to keep the memory alive of these unruly days, and to preserve the name of Garryowen from utter extinction. The annual fair which is held on the spot presents a spectacle of gaiety and uproar which might rival its most boisterous days; and strangers still enquire for the place with a curiosity which its appearance seldom fails to disappoint. Our national lyrist has immortalized the air, by adapting to it one of the liveliest of his melodies — the adventures of which it was once the scene, constitute a fund of standing joke and anecdote, which are not neglected by the neighbouring story-tellers — and a rough voice may still occasionally be heard by the traveller who passes near its ruined dwellings at evening, to chaunt a stanza of the chorus which was once in the mouth of every individual in the kingdom:

'Tis there we'll drink the nut-brown ale,  
And pay the reck'nin' on the nail,  
No man for debt shall go to jail  
From Garryowen na gloria.

(*"The Collegians"* by Gerald Griffin, 1828).



# annie

She sits quietly in the corner of the little pub: The floor is covered in sawdust and the smell of the turf fire adds to the feeling of home and friendship. She doesn't sip port or whiskey. Annie takes big gulps of creamy Guinness for it helps to ease away the pain of a long, hard life.

Annie is an itinerant, or tinker, a member of the travelling people. Her big body casts long shadows across the floor of the turf-lit room. She has the appearance of an old mother eagle with hooked nose and quick, alert eyes. Her face is an artillery range of pockmarks: a lifetime's ledger of all the savage beatings she has endured.

She was mother to a large family some born by the side of the road — A family of fourth class citizens through no fault of their own. One of her sons choked to death in his own dunke puke; he died like a leper, alone, drowned in a sea of black despair. Annie has hawked everything from rotten apples to brass candlesticks, holy pictures and shamrock for Paddy's Day. She has begged for food to feed her hungry children, and dressed them with other peoples cast-offs.

She is no stranger to the custodians of the law; often they have kicked and dragged her by the hair to lie in a filthy cell, flea-ridden and stinking. She has been sent up more than once in her life, by blind, prejudiced judges.

"Six months hard labour — drunk and disorderly". "Nine months for stealing food", "But, Your Honour, the woman is pregnant". "Nine months".

Justice, Irish style for the poor people.

Annie is peaceful now, content to drink her five or six pints a day. She is queen of her tribe and sports golden charms underneath her bib, gifts from her children and grandchildren.

Now in the twilight of her days, Annie has won the respect and friendship of the young people whose social life is now set in this pub. She has re-lived her life for them in story and in song, a life colourful as the painted wagons of her people and as rough as a Connemara field on a wet winter's day.

She can die in peace now, knowing her son can pay the priests to perform the funeral rite. There will be no pauper's grave for Annie, not like the others of her tribe.

Soon Annie and her kind will be lost in the mists of time. They are slowly disappearing down country lanes into history, driven on by prejudice and neglect. Look hard and long now before it's too late, lest you miss their shadows . . . shadows in the Celtic twilight.

BRIAN QUINN

# Grog bites Man

BY FONAL GROWLY

At the annual somnolence of Scribes Synonymous this week, a report of the Festival of Merriman Mummies was circulated. Last year's shenanigans in the Co. Clare resort were judged to be a huge success — that's the word used most frequently by the female Scandanavian young students who were present on a Cultural Exchange, though others felt (their word) that matters became somewhat limp as the week degenerated.

'I was led to believe I'd find Irishmen as big as Brian Boru', said one — 'but all I got was a limping laddie who wanted to compare out joint G.N.P's', she said.

In response to her complaints — and many more of a similar vein — Bord Failte are considering the establishment of a Groping Groupie Festival as an ancillary attraction to the Merriman Mummies. The Mummies would continue to mime real life as it was lived ten thousand years ago in Co. Clare, while the Groping Groupie section, open only to middle-aged male journalists, randy academics and higher civil servants from Foreign Affairs would pounce about during seminars, pouncing on young Scandanavian students and prodding them awake (their word) with their invective and contagious humour.

Sean MacSeoin is 136.

# waiting

He sits on an old wooden box mending torn nets.  
He is bent over like a fish hook, and his big toe holds the  
Net steady as his nimble fingers draw the line to and fro.

He is a little man, diminutive in every way, only five feet  
Tall and his cap is a size too small, yet he carries his  
Eighty-three years well.

He was a sailor. Ran away from home as a boy and sailed  
Before the mast on board a clipper.

He has tramped from Cape Town to New York and from Rio  
to Glasgow.

He has watched the moon grow full on the dark coast of  
Africa.

And seen the sunrise bring a new day to the blue waters of  
The Indian Ocean.

He has drank and fought in pub brawls and shacked up  
With all sorts of women in a score of countries. He knows the  
Lingo of the waterfront and can sense danger in a dark alley  
Be it in 'Frisco or Bombay.

The sea is his whole life; it has been both father and mother to  
Him, provider and friend.

He never married, for his bond with the sea was as strong  
As the anchor chain of his shop.

All the world was his oyster and he savoured it to the full,  
He has gleaned a wealth of experience and a treasure-trove  
Of memories.

He is a brother to Odysseus, keeper of a tradition that spans  
Forty centuries, from the Minoan galleys to the superships  
Of today.

He is safely back in harbour now and spends his days in the  
Cafe Reon Talking sea talk with old cronies.

His only voyages now go back to his youth as half-forgotten  
names of

Half-forgotten places ease gently back to mind

He now awaits his ticket for his final voyage, to a destination  
Unknown, to his last port of call.

Soon it will be time to close the log book . . . time to  
Ring the bell for thy last watch . . . time to set a course  
straight

And true far beyond the Milky Way.

BRIAN QUINN

## CREATE

That phenomenal compulsion  
that impels the cell  
to further procreation or mutation  
through each succeeding biological heaven or hell,  
evolved the madness of the poet-soul,  
who down the evolutionary aeons  
forever hears  
— the echoes through his being vibrate,  
create, . . . cre-ate, . . . cre-ate.

SEAN HEALY



# TAXING THE FARMERS

The question of taxation and farmers is gradually becoming a central issue in Irish politics. Last year when farming income rose by 16% to £860 million, farmers paid only £8 million in income tax. This sum must be compared with the £520 million paid by P.A.Y.E. taxpayers who provided 86.5% of the total income tax revenue, or £6 out of every £7 collected.

Irish farmers have not been in the tax net for very long. It is only four years since the Coalition Government made the first tentative moves to bring a small minority of the wealthiest farmers within the scope of the income tax code. But delays in the administrative procedure within the Revenue Commissioners and the lack of staff to deal with the new and loosely-framed regulations allowed many farmers to avoid payment.

The £8 million collected from farmers last year was only £1 million more than in the previous year, in spite of the fact that an additional 7,500 farmers had been brought into the tax net in 1978 when the threshold after which farmers were required to pay was reduced to £60 PLV.

Farmers have a choice when paying tax. They can do so on the basis of accounts kept by themselves or on the national system. On the national system, the valuation of the land (per £ valuation) is multiplied by a figure called the "multiplier" which is generally reckoned to be the average earnings of one unit of P.L.V., estimated at £90 last year. Dr. John Heavey of the Production Economics Unit of the Agricultural Institute has pointed out that there are farms earning up to £300 per acre. Since the average valuation of land is about 50p per acre and that some Irish farmers could have incomes of up to £600 per £ valuation, it is obvious that the multiplier is way out of line.

Dr. Heavey, has also stated that it seems obscene that farmers making £100,000 pay only £200 tax. He has predicted that, sooner or later tax on the actual earning of farmers will have to be paid.

Meanwhile there are other views. Peadar MacCanna of the Bank of Ireland has stated: 'As long as the Government sticks to the national system, the effects of taxation on farm investment will be minimal'.

But the effect of the P.A.Y.E. system on workers' wages is far from minimal. And no government will grasp the political nettle of taxing the farmers until it is forced to do so by the combined pressure of workers and their trade unions.

There are a number of other grounds on which the present income tax code can be seen to discriminate against the wage and salary earners of this country. The most obvious one is that the person paying PAYE tax has no loopholes; he is caught in the net, operated jointly by the Revenue Commissioners and the employers, and has no escape. Businessmen and farmers on the other hand, are assessable under Schedule D, as it's called, and the first important difference is that the Revenue Commissioners accept the figures submitted by the farmers and businessmen or their accountants as their true profits. It is obvious that the figures will be related directly to the honesty or otherwise of the person and it is clear, that most of them seriously understate their profits. The Revenue Commissioners clearly have insufficient staff to properly operate the system. In the circumstances direct government policy connives in ensuring that the person who pays tax under the PAYE system bears an unfair proportion of the tax burden.

Another difference and one that is clearly to the advantage of those who are assessed under Schedule D is that their income for assessment is the income of the previous year, whereas PAYE taxpayers are taxed on their actual income of the year. In an inflationary period with profits and wages rising this means in effect that any successful businessman will have the benefit of his actual year's profits (e.g. for investment

purposes) for a year before they (or at any rate the declared proportion of them) attract tax.

The rules regarding allowable expenses are much more stringent for the PAYE taxpayer than for his counterpart. The professional man or self-employed person. Doctors, auctioneers, priests, etc. can and do claim that for instance, the bulk of their motoring expenses are for business use whereas if the ordinary employed person even attempts to claim bus fares to work it is immediately ruled out. This is blatantly unfair.

The better off you are the longer you can defer payment of tax. There is a complicated appeals procedure for the self-employed which can and does postpone the payment of tax for the wealthy who can afford to pay accountants to look after their affairs. Whilst the ordinary PAYE taxpayer is now paying income tax on his current earnings, in many cases it can be assumed that the rich are still successfully holding up payments of last year's tax.

The income tax system operated by the government is essentially one which favours the bosses. Whilst it is true that the paperwork involved in keeping the PAYE system on the rails is increasingly becoming a burden for the employers, nonetheless they continue to operate the onerous task — and the essential reason is that the tax collected through PAYE is largely responsible for keeping the spotlight off the bosses and the understatement of profits that they can consequently get away with.

Therefore, the struggle for a just tax system must be seen in the context of the overall struggle for a socialist society. In this regard the trade unions must be drawn into the forefront of this struggle. In the past trade unions have shown a narrow, blinkered attitude towards the aspirations and needs of their members. It is now increasingly realised that it is no good to bargain for increased wages without having regard to the proportion of the negotiated increase that will be swallowed up in taxation.

In mere practical terms what should be the immediate demands of the PAYE taxpayer?

(1) A campaign should be initiated which would demand that the PAYE taxpayer have the same basis of assessment as those taxed under Schedule D. Whilst this point might prove difficult to grasp for the ordinary worker, nonetheless there would be a quite useful tax saving involved. It would be a demand that could be pressed forward in the interests of simple justice.

(2). A less obvious but very vital reform would be a campaign to insist on adequate staffing to properly supervise the operation of the taxes that relate to farmers businesses and professional people. It is not sufficiently widely appreciated that the staff available to the Revenue Commissioners is totally inadequate to cope with the volume of work involved, and that in regard to the taxes which require technical expertise (i.e. the non-PAYE taxes) there is a prevailing attitude of just accepting any old thing, as there is no possibility open to the staff of checking the veracity or otherwise of the accounts submitted. Especially with regard to the new taxes, it should be insisted that additional staff be recruited, otherwise evasion will be widespread and the effect of the taxes will be minimal.

(3) The commitment of the Minister for Finance to progressively review the income tax allowances must be secured.

(4) Penalties for evasion should be penal, and the derisory present level of fines should be revised completely.

Unless Irish workers and their trade unions are prepared to fight strenuously for these demands the present unequal tax system will continue to operate against them.